

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0317

STADIS////////////////////////////////

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, PDIP, VM, US
SUBJECT: DEBRIEFING OF CREW OF YACHT BRILLIG

REF: SINGAPORE 0286

1. DURING SECOND AND FINAL PLANNED DEBRIEFING JANUARY 20
OF BRILLIG CREW, DELLENGAUGH INFORMED US THAT
THE AUTHORITIES IN HO CHI MINH CITY RECOMMENDED SUBSTANTIALLY
STIFFER SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS THAN HANOI FINALLY IMPOSED.
ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE THE "SETTLEMENT" DECEMBER 22, DELLENGAUBH'S
CIVILIAN INTERROGATOR, A SOUTH VIETNAMESE ENGLISH PROFESSOR
IN WHOM SHE PLACED CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE, INDICATED TO HER
THAT HO CHI MINH CITY AUTHORITIES WERE RECOMMENDING THAT,
IN ADDITION TO SEIZURE OF "ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES" AND "UNUSUAL
COMMUNICATIONS" EQUIPMENT AND A FINE AT ONE POINT FIXED AT US\$1.2
TO \$1.3 MILLION, LOCAL AUTHORITIES RECOMMENDED SEIZURE OF THE
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YACHT AND A ONE TO THREE YEAR PRISON SENTENCE. FINE DELLENGAUBH
SAID, WAS SPECIFICALLY FOR ALLEGED DRUG CHARGES, NOT FOR OTHER
CHARGES.

2. HO CHI MINH CITY AUTHORITIES INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, WHO WERE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, CUSTOMS
OFFICIALS, ALSO PROBABLY SOUTHERNS, AND SECURITY OFFICIALS,

WHO WERE FROM NORTH VIETNAM AND CLEARLY IN CHARGE. INTERROGATORS INCLUDED THE SECURITY, CHIEF INTERROGATOR NAMED QUANT (PHONETIC) AND ANOTHER MILITARY OFFICER NAMED HAI. BRILLIG CREW THINK THAT HAI WAS IN CHARGE OF THE BRILLIG CASE; HE CARRIED THE LOCAL RECOMMENDATION ON THE SETTLEMENT TO HANOI AND RETURNED FOR THE DECEMBER 22 SETTLEMENT.

3. DURING THE DECEMBER INTERROGATIONS, DICKERMAN WAS TOLD FREQUENTLY THAT THE BRILLIG FATE WAS BEING DISCUSSED IN US-SRV PARIS TALKS, WHICH HE WAS LED TO BELIEVE WERE OCCURRING EVERY TWO WEEKS. AFTER INFORMING THE USG DECEMBER 19-20 THAT THE BRILLIG WOULD BE RELEASED, BUT BEFORE TELLING THE BRILLIG CREW OF THIS DECISION, THE VIETNAMESE TOLD DICKERMAN THAT THE US HAD CEASED REQUESTING THE RELEASE OF THE CREW, BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO DICKERMAN, THE VIETNAMESE SAID "THERE IS A SIGN IN EVERY US CONSULATE THAT WHEN AMERICANS GET INVOLVED IN DRUGS, THEY ARE NO LONGER AMERICAN CITIZENS." CREW ASSUMES THIS PLOY WAS DESIGNED TO PUT PRESSURE ON THEM TO RAISE MONEY TO PAY THE FINE.

4. ON US-SRV RELATIONS, DELLENBAUGH TOLD US THAT THE VIETNAMESE HAD DESCRIBED THE BRILLIG CREW AS A "THORN IN THE SIDE OF US-SRV RELATIONS." APPARENTLY DISCUSSING THIS SUBJECT WITH THEIR INTERROGATORS AT SOME LENGTH, DELLENBAUGH SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE DESCRIBED THE POLICIES TOWARD VIETNAM OF FOUR US ADMINISTRATIONS AS HOSTILE. VIETNAMESE RECALLED GREAT HOPE THAT

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THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE DIFFERENT. EARLY ACTIONS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WERE SEEN AS CONSTRUCTIVE AT FIRST BUT SUBSEQUENTLY LESS SO. DELLENBAUGH SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE SEEM TO HAVE GIVEN UP ON THE US' FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER ARTICLE 21 OF THE PARIS PEACE ACCORDS, THE ARTICLE ON "HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR", TO WHICH THE VIETNAMESE REFERRED OCCASIONALLY.

DELLENBAUGH, NEVERTHELESS, GAINED IMPRESSION THAT, DESPITE DISCOURAGEMENT, THE VIETNAMESE STILL HOPE FOR NORMALIZATION WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. IN THE PROCESS OF DISCUSSING THE SUBJECT, THE VIETNAMESE SPOKE A GREAT DEAL ABOUT TRADE AND OTHER ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

HOLDRIDGE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0317

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5. CREW WAS JAILED AND INTERROGATED IN A "TRIANGULAR SHAPED PRISON, ACROSS A LONG BRIDGE", ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES FROM THE SAIGON HARBOR (NOTE: PRISON LOCATION SOUNDS LIKE THU DUC TO DEBRIEFER, ACROSS THE BRIDGE TO BIEN HOA). THEY WERE KEPT, INITIALLY IN THIRD FLOOR CELLS, OVERLOOKING WHAT LOOKED LIKE A MARRIED ENLISTED MEN'S CAMP AND, FURTHER BEYOND, WHAT APPEARED TO BE COLLEGE CLASSROOMS OF STUDENTS IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES. (DICKERMAN THOUGHT THIS WAS A REEDUCATION CAMP.) LATER DICKERMAN WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE FIRST FLOOR IN A CELL BLOCK WITH ONE OR TWO OTHER PRISONERS AND NO VIEW. THERE WERE NO OTHER FOREIGNERS IN THE PRISON NOR DID THE CREW HEAR OF ANY OTHERS IN HO CHI MINH CITY. VIETNAMESE PRISONERS WERE FED A SMALL LOAF OF BREAD EACH MORNING, SOUP, RICE AND VEGETABLES IN THE EVENING. BRILLIG CREW RECEIVED DOUBLE THIS RATION. FOR READING, THEY WERE PROVIDED VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA, LARGELY CONCERNING THE WAR WITH THE US, AND, ONCE OR TWICE, THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW.

6. CREW WAS TRANSPORTED TO THE DOCK ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE
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LEAVING HO CHI MINH CITY BUT WINDOWS OF THE VAN WERE COVERED, PREVENTING DETAILED VIEW OF STREET SCENES. THEY WERE AWARE OF CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY, MANY BICYCLES AND MOTORCYCLES WITH FAR FEWER CARS AND TRUCKS. THEY DID, HOWEVER, SEE NUMEROUS US VEHICLES OPERATING. THEIR ONLY DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF GENERAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS CAME FROM THEIR INTERROGATORS, WHO TOLD THEM THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS "VERY BAD". INTERROGATORS TOLD THEM THAT BLACK MARKET PRICES WERE ROUGHLY FIVE TIMES GOVERN-

MENT RATION PURCHASE PRICES. THEY HAD ALMOST NO OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH OTHER VIETNAMESE. THEY WERE ESSENTIALLY UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN THEIR RENTED VILLA AND NOT ALLOWED OUT. SERVANTS PURCHASED THEIR FOOD AT COSTS, DELLENBAUGH SAID, ROUGHLY TWICE THEIR COST IN BANGKOK.

7. IN VUNG TAU, THEY SAW TWO OR THREE CARGO SHIPS ENTER THE RIVER TO SAIGON EACH DAY, EITHER RUSSIAN OR VIETNAMESE. THEY WERE UNABLE TO SEE THE CARGO.

8. COMMENT: ALL THREE AGAIN EXPRESSED DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE EFFORTS THE USG HAD MADE ON THEIR BEHALF AND REGRET THAT THEY HAD CAUSED THE GOVERNMENT AND THEIR FAMILIES SUCH DIFFICULTIES. THEY ARE UNSURE HOW TO TREAT THE ATTENTION THEY ARE RECEIVING FROM THE PRESS AND FROM PUBLISHERS SEEKING EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO THEIR STORY. DENIED ACCESS IN VIETNAM TO INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA, THEY ARE STILL GROPING TO FIND OUT WHERE THEY STAND, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF THE DRUG CHARGES AND BECAUSE OF THE REMARKS MADE IN HO CHI MINH CITY TO THE WNET-TV INTERVIEWER JOHN ALPERT, BOTH AT A MEETING AT THEIR VILLA AND IN AN INTERVIEW, AIRED BY NBC AND CARRIED BY PACIFIC STARS AND STRIPES. THEY APPEAR DEEPLY CHAGRINED NOW OVER THEIR UNGUARDED COMMENTS IN THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER IN HO CHI MINH CITY WITH A WESTERNER, ALPERT, AFTER WEEKS OF BEING HELD IN CAPTIVITY.

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9. WE FOUND EXTREMELY INTERESTING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN HOW THE LOCAL INTERROGATORS WERE HANDLING THE BRILLIG CREW AND THE DEVELOPMENTS IN US-SRV RELATIONS THROUGH THE PARIS PEACE TALKS. WITH LATTER IN MIND, HANOI WAS CLEARLY MOST INTERESTED IN DISPOSING OF THE CASE, A FACT WHICH IMPOSED HAPHAZARD RESOLUTION OF SOME FACETS OF THE "SETTLEMENT", ESPECIALLY THE PAYMENT OF THE FINE. HOLDRIDGE

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